

A
METHOD
WITH A
Roman Catholick.

In Two LETTERS, from a
MINISTER
OF THE
Church of England,
to his PARISHIONER.

Mark i. 15. Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.

Mark x. 16. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall

L O N D O N:

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A METHOD *with a* ROMAN. CATHOLICK.

Dear Sir,



AM so far from discouraging you in an impartial Inquiry into Religion; or which is the safest Way to obtain Eternal Life; that I look upon such a Disposition of Mind to be not only a reasonable, but a very commendable one; and that which distinguisheth Man from the lower Kinds of Animals. Whoever put you upon *Proving all Things*, did none other Thing than an Apostle hath done before him; tho', I am afraid, he will not, when you have done it, be for your *holding fast that which is Good*; should you happen to differ from him. He will have you judge for your self indeed; but withal, you must conclude as himself doth: You must interpret the Holy Scriptures, and form your Judgment by That of *his Church*; you will be, otherwise, a lost Man with him. And what doth This differ from intreating you to come over to Him without Examining at All?

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BUT

BUT he who maketh Inquiry, in the Way which will please God, must come to it without Biais ; he must lay aside all *undue* Reverence for Man ; every Weight, the Prejudices of Education, and the Attachments of Interest, and every Thing which may hinder that Freedom of Thought, and that Impartiality of Judgment, which is so necessary to form a right one. We must embrace, or let go ; abide by, or give up every Thing, as it appeareth to us True or False. We must not consult with Flesh and Blood.

FOR, as Religion is not to descend to us, as Estates do, but must be a Treasure of our own finding ; so are we able, *of our own selves*, to find it ; every Man is capable of it. He must needs be, if his *Salvation* depends upon it ; for who can imagine, that the Almighty should appoint Means to save us, and at the same Time not enable us to discover what they are ? A Man may use what Helps he will ; confer, and reason with those likely to instruct him ; but to make it *his* Religion, he must make a Judgment of it *himself*. Why doth *your Friend* embrace the Communion of the Church of *Rome* ; but because he thinks it reasonable ; because *he* judgeth that he ought to do so ? So that you see the last Resort, even of a *Roman Catholick*, is Reason ; and it must be yours : for Reason is a thing common to the whole Species, to all People, Nations, and Languages, to every one under Heaven. If you are a Man, you have it ; and if you have it, you not only *may*, but *ought* to make use of it : And you cannot use

use it in any Affair, you are more concern'd in, than That of Religion. It offers its self to be try'd by it ; It loveth the Light, and cometh to it ; hath no Fear of being reproved by it.

TO make a sober and an humble use of our Understandings, is not only our Privilege, but our Duty : They are *the Candle of the Lord*, a Light which the God of Heaven hath hung out, whereby we are not only to *discern Spirits*, but to *try them*. Whatever contradicts Reason, (as well as *the Law and the Testimony*) we may rest assured cannot be true ; hath *no Light* in it, whatever glittering Pretences it may make to it. It is not Learning, nor Authority, no, not that of *an Angel from Heaven*, can set it aside, or vacate it ; unless we can suppose an *Outward* divine Revelation to contradict the *Inward* ; or that God (for it is his Work) gave us our Reason to deceive us ; and when he had done that, set up another Revelation to bring us out of the Error, which our Reason, by his *Appointment*, had led us into.

BUT then, by Religion, I do not mean every Truth ; no, nor every revealed Divine Truth : (for who hath look'd into, or in whom *dwells all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge* ? who is sufficient for such a Research ?) but by Religion, I intend *only* the *Belief* of, and the *doing* that which it hath pleased God to make necessary for us to *believe* and *do*, if ever we will be saved. Truths there are, which my *Salvation* is not concern'd with : the more indeed, that I know of them, the better ; but Salvation cannot be hazarded by not meddling with

with Points, by not determining Questions which our Lord hath not bidden us to determine. There are *Truths* of which you, or I, *Sir*, may very *safely* be ignorant, though the Knowledge of them may be exceeding useful: our *Salvation*, as I said, depends *only* on believing and doing *those Things* which our blessed Saviour hath *commanded* to be believed and done, and which he has obliged us to believe and do, *if we will enter into Life*. A very short Reasoning will convince you of this.

I observe then, that as God is the Fountain of all Power, (as that Word signifies Might) so all Authority, or Right of Commanding, must likewise be from Him. And if so, as he *only* has the Power of *making happy* or *miserable*; so none can annex Happiness, or Misery, or make it to follow upon performing such and such Acts, but he who, *alone*, can cause Happiness, or make Miserable. He must *Commission* those who promise the one, or denounce the other; appoint the *Conditions* of obtaining Happiness, or incurring his Displeasure; as well as *empower* to prepare *Rewards* and *Punishments*, and to distribute them.

Christ Jesus hath such a Commission; *Him* hath God exalted to be a Prince, and a Saviour, to give Repentance, and Forgiveness of Sins, to all them that obey him. This is the *Beloved Son* we are to hear, and of whom we are to receive our Reward. He proposeth the *Conditions* of Salvation, and he confers it. I persuade myself, *Sir*, that you see plainly, by this time, that no Man in the World hath Authority to impose *other Conditions* of obtaining Eternal Life,

Life, than those which *he* hath laid down, and on which *he* hath suspended it ; for it is in his Power *only*, he *only* hath Authority to give it. *The Kingdom is the Lord's*, and he admits into it upon no other Terms but *his own* ; those *he* has received to declare, those *he* hath published in the Hearing of all the World. Let us consider what they are : and if I can shew you they are believed, and taught in the *Church of England*, there can be no reason for your quitting the Communion of it. You are safe, *so far forth* as the Communion of a Church can make you safe.

IF you look into the Writings of the Evangelists, where the glad Tidings which our Lord brought to the World are recorded ; you will find them to be, that *Whosoever believeth on him shall receive Remission of Sins*. To Believe on him, is nothing else, but to give Credit to the good Message which God hath sent by him, and to obey it ; for as to *Believe Moses*, was to *Believe his Writings*, so to Believe in Christ, is to Believe *his Words*. This *Faith in him* imports the being fully persuaded that the Father sent him ; and carries with it a Compliance with whatsoever he commandeth *as a Condition* of the Divine Acceptance. And what is that ? Why, it is *μετανοεῖν*, to repent, or to change our Minds ; and to bring forth Fruits, worthy such a Change : Or, as St. Paul speaks, *to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World*. I need not enumerate the several Duties of Morality ; (none of which he has superseded) Christians are well enough agreed about them.

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ACCORDINGLY, the Apostles, as he commanded them, carried this Gospel (the good News) *into all the World*; and preached every where, *that Men should Repent*, i. e. amend their Lives. This *Repentance* and *Faith*, infer one another: No Man will Repent, but he who Believeth that our Lord has Authority to grant Remission of Sins upon it; and he who Believes that he hath, hath the strongest Motive that can be, if he finds he needs Repentance, to set about it.

MOTIVES, doubtless there were, to induce the gracious Lord to grant this *Remission*: And we have them in the New Testament: but, whatever they are, an accurate Knowledge of them is not made the *necessary* Condition of Pardon. 'Tis *Repentance* is *that*; which is consequent to Faith, and ariseth from it.

IT appears, then, that our blessed Saviour promiseth, in his Father's Name, *Forgiveness of Sins* upon Repentance: he will reward it, he saith, with *Eternal Life*. Can any Man, then, any Society of Men, any Church, any Council, put you by it, provided you do *repent* and *believe* in him? *By what Authority can they do these things, and who gave them this Authority? Is it from Heaven, or of Men?*

THIS is the Faith we profess, this the Engagement we bring our selves under at our *Baptism*; and upon these, as summ'd up in the Apostolical Creed, we are admitted into the Christian Church; and the Church of *Rome* receives upon the same Profession. I would fain know then, who it is that *can cast out*

out of it, before we have made a *Forfeiture*, by a wicked Life, of the *Grace* of the *Gospel Covenant*. I do not know what effect *Arrogance* and *Menace* may have upon you, *Sir*; for myself I can and will continue, by the *Grace* of *God*, to rely upon the *Divine Promise*. I will trust my Saviour for the *Reward*, if I perform *his own Conditions*; and look on all other (be they few or many) as *Encroachments* on *his Dominion*; presumptuous *Appendages* to his *Covenant*; and the *Damnation* affix'd to the not fulfilling them, as a *vain Terror*. See for your self, my Friend, look into your *Bible*; find out (if you can) what *other thing* it is, which the *Judge of All* hath appointed as a *Condition* of being received into *his House* and into his *Kingdom*, which is not believed and taught and to be come at in the *Church of England*? Beg your Friends of the *Church of Rome* to name it. If they cannot, (and assure your self *they cannot*) ask your self, or any Man who will trust his Reason, whether he will cast out of *his Kingdom* those who *thus* believe, and *thus* do, when he hath assured he will *not*; and whether they who do so shall *not inherit the Kingdom of God*, when he hath so solemnly declared they *shall*?

NOR do we only believe and practise the *Essentials* of Christianity, but we make use of all *Means*, whether natural or instituted, to form and to carry on the *Christian Life* in us. For,

TO impress on us our *Obligation to Newness of Life*, we are, as our Lord hath commanded, baptized with Water, in the Name

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of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; of the Father, who sent the good Message ; of the Son, who brought it ; and of the Holy Ghost, by whose Assistance we are enabled to repent and believe for the *Remission of Sins* ; though at the same time we are aware, with St. Peter, that not so much the washing with Water, *the putting away the Filth of the Flesh* saveth us, as *the Answer of a good Conscience towards God*.

TO preserve in our Minds a Sense of the Love of Christ ; the Memory of his Sufferings and the Merits of his Crois ; we eat of the Bread, and drink of the Cup of the Lord, at his Holy Supper, as he hath bidden us. We do not appropriate the Wine to the *Priests*, nor do we keep back Part of the Sacrament from any of the Faithful : As we know not of any Power we have to do it ; so are we afraid we should, by so doing, not only deviate from the *Institution*, but *profane* it. Tho' we do not worship the Elements (for we worship only the *Living God*) yet we use them with that Reverence, which is due to things *Holy* ; that is, to things separated from a common to a *sacred* use. We do not carry one, or other of them, in Procession ; nor pretend to bear him who *upholdeth all things* on our Shoulders ; we do not offer incense to That which our Hands have fashioned ; That which our own Fingers have made. No, we remember, we are called out of darkness, to keep our selves from Idols.

WE do not forsake the Assembling our selves together, to pay our highest Homage to the Lord of Heaven, and Earth, by the *Mediati-*

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on of his Blessed Son; thereby avowing his Dominion over us, and our Belief on him whom he hath sent.

AND in these Assemblies it is, that the Holy Scriptures are read to us; and the whole Service celebrated in a Language we *All* understand; and whereby *All* may be edified. To this we add Sermons; exhorting us to Holiness of Life; *correcting, reprovng, instructing us in Righteousness*, that we may be *thoroughly furnished unto all good Works*.

WE have Times set apart, in a particular manner, for commemorating the principal Parts of our Lord's Mediation; his Birth, his Passion and Death, his Resurrection and Ascension; and the Descent of the Holy Ghost.

WE reverence the Memory of the *Apostles* of Christ; together with all the *Saints* departed: They are propos'd to us as *Examples* of Holy Living; but we do this Honour to those *only* whom we know to have *lived*; and to have been *Saints*. We do not adorn our Accounts of them with *Fiction*; with *lying Wonders*: We leave that to him, whose *Coming* was to be *with all Deceiveableness of Unrighteousness*.

AND all this is performed by those who we trust are called *Inwardly*: (Outwardly, be sure they are) and *Consecrated* to their Functions by others who have obtained *a Part in this Ministry*; and who (if you lay stress upon that) have as *uninterrupted* a Succession, as any Bishops are *known* to have in the whole Christian World.

IN God's Name, *Sir*, what can be wanting to the Salvation of a Man, who in this

manner believes, and obeys the *Gospel*; who is led on, and conducted, by *such Means*; and under such an *Evangelical Direction*. I will not suspect (one does not know what to think) that you are under any *Temptation* to leave our Communion, because we do not take upon us to warrant Christian Blessedness without Christian Practice, and solid Virtue; without any thing less than a sincere, universal *Obedience*; that it is to get a *Toleration*, or an easy *Abso-lution* for Vice. There are those, they say, who will *undertake* it; and that at very reasonable rates. O, my Friend, consider who it is that hath said, *Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord: Be not deceived, God is not mocked*. Never be perswaded that the *Holy One* hath impower'd any *Man* to give out such *Indulgences*; or that he will ratify such Pardons: Whatever they *cost* at the *Apostolick Chamber*; they will not give us an Entrance amongst them that are sanctified; they are worth nothing in the Heavenly Mansions.

WHEN *Naman* the Syrian address'd the Prophet to heal him of his *Leprosy*; he only bade him to wash in *Jordan*, and be *clean*. 'Tis the same thing, in effect, which I have said to you: *Repent and believe the Gospel*. He was a great Man with his Master, and honourable; and he thought the Prophet had ill consulted his own Reputation; nor enough considered the Character of the first Minister of the King of Syria; he was even angry, and went away in a Rage. Perhaps you may entertain a Thought like his. You expected, probably, a detail of *Controversy*; that I should have

have ransack'd a *Library* to have satisfy'd you; have told you what one *Saint* said, and the other *Confessor*; have sent you a Letter three quarters *Latin*; and edg'd with I know not how many great Names. But what would you have been the wiser? or, if you had; what would the Bulk of my Parish, which you know has a World of poor People in it, have been the better for it? For, to tell you the Truth, I write for *them*, as well as you; and, if there is occasion for it, I shall give what I now send you to the *Publick*. I say this, to make some excuse for that *Plainness* of Speech, and the *Repetitions* you will find in it. I confess to you also, that, by *this Method*, I have somewhat gratified my own *Inclination*, as finding it the best *Expedient* for a well-settled *Peace* of Mind. There are not, I believe, a great many, who have been more inquisitive into the various Forms and Methods of Religion than my self; or who have spent more time in canvassing and adjusting Opinions. I will only say upon it, that a Man had need have a good Head, and vast *Luck*; a Body of Brass, and the Age of *Methusaleh*; to read and consider, and determine *rightly* on all the Questions, as they speak, in *Divinity*. I am sure *my Salvation* can never depend upon it; for I cannot do it. But every one may be made to know what *Repentance*, or Amendment and Perseverance in it is; what *Eternal Life* is; and what it is to *Believe on him* whom God hath sent with the good *Message* of *Pardon*. This, I am certain, I understand, and take *rightly*. I see plainly, that all *Subtleties*, all
your

your Finenesses (true or false) in Religion, are good for Nothing. At best, they only amuse; they often puzzle, and almost always disquiet.

I have not sent you, *Sir*, to one Church, or the other Council; to this Doctor, or that learned Man; but to *Christ himself*, who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. If you Believe, and follow him *only*; Believe nothing, but what Himself and his Apostles have lain down, and said you *must* Believe; you have noble Views; the Christian Religion appears Glorious; is not only Defensible, but *worthy of all Acceptation*. You will feel a Contentation of Heart, and a Liberty within; and the most powerful Motives for doing Good that can be. And, being thus established, you will continue (I trust you will) in the Communion of the Church of *England*; where the *Gospel* is set forth; and all the Parts of *Morality*, that is, the *Christian Life*, explained, and enforced, without Whimsy, without Enthusiasm: where you will not be led on by Juggle, or feigned Miracles, Imagery, or spiritual Mechanisms; but by the sincere *Word of God*. You will hear plain Virtue recommended; and have it perpetually sounded in your Ears (Oh, that all Men were convinc'd of it!) that *nothing* in the whole World can *save* us, without *fearing God, and working Righteousness*.

YOU will be made to know, that *nothing else* can do us Good; because nothing else can possibly *please God*; who, as I said at first, is the Fountain of all *Power*, and who alone is able to give *Happiness*, or to make *Miserable*.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

S I R,

IF you have comprehended *rightly* the Force of the Reasoning I sent you the last Week, you will be able very much to *shorten*, if not to put an *End* to your Conferences with the Emissaries of the Church of *Rome*. You will infer, with Certainty, that, supposing *every one of the Articles*, which the Church of *Rome* will have received as *Articles of Faith*, which *they* believe, and *we* do not; I say, suppose they should be found to be *Truths*, (which we are *sure* they will not be) yet we can never hazard our *Salvation* by not believing them. We *may err*, if we do not believe them; but *every Error* is not a *damnable* one. You will be able to shew them, that not the Belief of *every Truth*, but of those *only* which Christ hath made a *Condition* of Salvation, is, indeed, *necessary* to it; for to use the Words of his Grace the Archbishop of *Tuam*, * “ If a
 “ Doctrine be, in it self, never so true, yet
 “ if God has no way laid any Command upon
 “ me to believe it; in this case, not to be-
 “ lieve is no Sin (for where no Law is (or
 in other Terms, no Command) “ there is no
 “ Transgression, that is to say, *no Sin*, *Rom.*
 “ xiv. 15.) nor, consequently, can this my
 “ want of Belief be any Bar or Obstruction

* *Plain and easy Method*, &c. p. 3.

“ to my Salvation.” You will say to them, let Transubstantiation, Purgatory, &c. be supposed *Truths*, the Worship of Images and Reliques ever so *lawful*; since neither the Belief of the one, nor the Practice of the other, is enjoyn’d us, the *not* believing and leaving them *undone*, can never *hurt* us. Hurt us! how should it? unless they will say, that the Church of *Rome* hath Power to exhibit a *new* Covenant of Grace; to make *other* Conditions of Pardon, than the *One Master* Christ has made. And let me hear any Man say that.

YES, you will say, not believing Transubstantiation may greatly *injure* us; our Souls you may think, are nourished by our Lord’s Body (you mean his *natural* Body) in the Sacrament, unto everlasting Life. Be it so: It is not *your* believing, or *not* believing the *corporal* Presence, can *Transubstantiate* the Bread and Wine. That must be done, either by pronouncing the Words of Institution, or the Prayer of the Church, or by the *Power* of the Priest. Now be it by the Efficacy of the one or the other, the same Thing must be produced in the Church of *England*, as in the Church of *Rome*: for the *Validity* of our Ordinations, and the Words of *Consecration* being the *same*, there must *necessarily* arise the same *Effects*; so that if the Priests of the Church of *Rome* are able to *make* the Body of Christ, so *can*, and *do ours*; there can be no *Loss* in that respect. If our Lord’s natural Body and Blood are exhibited in the Sacrament; Priests Protestant, as well as Romanist, exhibit them, or neither does. I have *supposed* our Ordinations *good*;
you

you say, your Friend is a Man of Probity, and Conscience; and, if he be, he will not palm upon you the Fable of the *Nagg's-Head* Ordination: The whole World has now, for a good while, cry'd shame at it.

BUT (alas!) Sir, can a Man of your Understanding and Capacity, be brought to believe that Man can *make* God? a Creature, his Creator? That a *Wafer*, which you are assured never did, never can move it self, *lives*? That a Piece of Matter, of an *Inch* Diameter, is a Man of five, or six *Foot*? I know it will be said, *With God, all Things are possible*. But the Question is, What he *has* Done; and what he has, in this case, *impower'd* Man to Do? Can God *make* Himself? Did the Man Christ Jesus, at his last Supper, *make* himself? If he did, he must *not* be, in order to be *made*: and, at the same time, he must *be*, in order to *Transubstantiate*; which is an exprefs Contradiction: which no Man will affirm, God *can* make good. Did our Lord, at his last Supper, when they say he made *Himself*, take himself into his *Hands*, and *give away* himself? Did the Disciples *eat* his Body over Night? What was it, then, which was *crucified* the next Morning? Was he under the Form of an *human Body*, on one Side of the Table; and under the Form of *Bread*, at the same Time, on the other? Was he in Eleven, or Twelve different Situations, at the same Table at once? Could he have eaten himself? (He might have eaten the Bread, doubtless, after he had consecrated it, which, if Transubstantiation be well grounded, was himself.) If so, one need not wonder to hear of a Saint's carrying his own Head in his Teeth. One would think, that they who

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affirm such things, instead of making the *Mysteries* of Religion *venerable*, were *ridiculing* them; or were delighted with putting the broadest *Affronts* they can devise, on the *Understandings* of Mankind. But, if some are given up to *believe Lyes*, it is no wonder if there be others who are given up to *tell* them. I expect you will call upon me to prove, that one and the same Body cannot be in *different* Places, at the *same* Time: but I will never undertake to *prove* that which is *self-evident*. Would you have me *prove* that Two and Two do *not* make Five? He who cannot discern they do not, must be left to his own Understanding: and I heartily wish him a better.

BUT what reason is there, supposing it possible, to think that there *is* a Transubstantiation in the Lord's Supper. Is it because our Lord hath said, *This is my Body*. It is a little odd, methinks, to appeal to the Scriptures for deciding a Question determinable by the Senses: Whether a Piece of Matter be Bread, or Flesh: Whether a particular Substance be a dead Lump, or a living Man. One would think *them* an improper Tribunal, to bring it before. It seems to belong to another Jurisdiction. It is like asking an Angel concerning Tastes; or what Fruit I like best: an Orange or an Olive. I can tell as well, it may be better, my self. I know Bread from Flesh, or I know nothing. For,

I observe that Matter is the real, or the occasional Cause (no matter which) of our ordinary Sensations. When it hath such a particular Configuration of Parts, and is applied to the Tongue and Palate, there is produced in

us the Sensation we call *Taste*. When we find *such* a Taste, we call it Flesh: when we are affected in another manner, which we also call a Taste, upon a like Application of Matter, otherwise configured, we call it Bread. And we are *as sure* it is Bread, and not Flesh; or Flesh, and not Bread; as we can be made, even by a Divine Revelation. For, whether that Revelation be made Inwardly, and Immediately; or Outwardly, by the Mediation of the Senses; we cannot be made more certain, than we are made by our ordinary Sensations.

IF I am inwardly persuaded, be it ever so strongly, I will add Divinely, that a Piece of Matter (let it be a Piece of Bread, after Consecration) is the Body of Christ; I cannot be more fully assured of it than I am, that a like, or the same Piece of Matter, after Consecration, is Bread, if I have the Taste of Bread raised in me.

OR, if I have a Revelation outwardly, by the Intromission of the Senses (by Seeing, Hearing, Feeling, Smelling, or Tasting) conveyed to me, I cannot be more strongly assured, by any of my Senses, or by all of them, that it is revealed to me to be the Body of Christ; than I am assured, by my Senses, Seeing, Feeling, Smelling, or Tasting, (Flesh or Bread are Neither of them the Object of Hearing) that it is Bread. How do I know that I Am, but because I perceive, I am sensible, that I Am? I perceive as plainly, I am as sensible, that a Piece of Bread, after Consecration, is Bread. Consequently, I am *as* certain, that it is *not* the Body of Christ, as that I Am. And who would desire a greater Assurance, than he

has of his own Being? I see the Sun at Noon; and am as sure that I taste Bread, after Consecration, as I am that I see the Sun. I am as sensible of the One, as of the Other. He who denies the One, may, if he pleases, deny the Other. But who will dispute with a Man, who, having Eyes in his Head, cannot discern that the Sun shines; or, though he does see it, puts a good Face upon it, and denies it.

BUT if a Man will conclude from our Lord's saying, *This is my Body*, that the Bread is changed into his Flesh: that his natural Body is exhibited in the Sacrament. Why should not one conclude, that he is a *Vine*, because he saith, not only, I am the Vine, but I am the true Vine? Doth he not say, *I am the Door*? *The good Shepherd*? Does not St. Paul say, *That Rock was Christ*? One needs not be told, that these Words are to be understood *figuratively*: or, if any Man will take them *literally*; I dare say you will look upon him, as a wretched Commentator. But, if these, and such like kind of Expressions are a figurative Phraseology; so likewise may the other. They *must* be, because the Letter destroys the Credibility of the Senses, infers Contradictions and Absurdities without number. To say no more; you cannot be more assured, that *This is my Body*, is written in the New Testament, than you are, that the sacred Elements are *Bread and Wine*: not so certain; for but one Sense (Seeing) assures the one, but *all* our Senses, but *one*, (Hearing) assure us of the other. Reason is *against* it; Faith does *not require* it: and, I am certain, no Man will be *against Reason*, but when Reason is *against him*.

BUT

BUT now, supposing there is no Transubstantiation ; what an horrible, what a *fatal* Mistake is it ? I do not mean as it is merely an Hypothesis, (let the Doctors have their play) but for the Adoration which is graff'd upon it. Here is a *Wafer* usurping the Throne of God ; a Piece of *Bread* receiving the Homage, which is due *only* to the most High ! *Idolatry*, which the Son of God came to *abolish*, lifting up itself above the Heavens ! *Paganism* triumphing over *Christianity* ; and the *Gates of Hell* prevailing. — Dear Sir ! if this be not Darknefs ; even a *Darknefs that may be felt* ; What is it ?

WHAT need have we of the Sacrifice of the Mass, since the Son of God was made a *Sacrifice for Sins for ever, having obtained Eternal Redemption for us* ?

AS for Purgatory, what *hurt* can it do us *not* to believe it, even tho' there *should* be such a Place, if so be, that we are *purged from our old Sins* whilst we live ; and since the *Belief* of it is not made a *Condition* of the New Covenant ? Much less can it do so, when there is *no* mention of it in the *Word of God* ; no, not a Tittle. But, what a *Delusion* will it be for Men to *hope* for it in the other World ; and, in consequence of this Belief, to *slacken* their Diligence in *working out their own Salvation* ; (it will not be denied that *many* have *slackened* it on that Score) should they find themselves in the *Fire that shall never be quenched* ? Can it ever enter into such a Head as yours, that Men (and they none of the *best* neither) can *suspend* your Salvation on the *Belief* of That, on which the Blessed Son of God has *not* suspended it ? On your believing a *refining* Fire, which *he* has not spoken a Word of ?

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That God has *prepared* a Place of Torment, (as Purgatory is) to be the *dread* of good Men, and the *hope* and the refuge of *bad*? I can no more believe it, than I can that he is *not* merciful, that he is unholy.

WHO can think that he will *damn* Men for refusing to *worship* Images; or to pray before them, (let who will command it) when himself has not (no Man will say he has) commanded it; but, to the best of their Understandings, it appears he has forbidden it, under All the Penalties that can be imagined?

WHAT *risque* does he run who doth not receive nor seek after (they are not worth it) *Judicial Absolution*, when the *Spirit of God* testifies that good Men are *Children of God*, and *Joint-Heirs with Christ*; and that they both shall be *glorified together*; when he hath a *Testimony within himself*, that he hath repented, and is converted, and that his *Sins shall be blotted out*? Transcribing is a little tedious; but I must needs adorn my Letter with a Reasoning of the Learned Dr. South (whom you so justly admire) on this Article. It is to be found in his Sermon on 1 *John* iii. 21. ‘ The Absolution pronounced by a Priest, whether *Papist* or *Protestant*——must be either Conditional, as running upon the Condition of Faith and Repentance,——or the *Absolution* must be pronounced in Terms *absolute* and *unconditional*: ‘ And if so, then the said *Absolution* becomes valid and effectual, either by virtue of the *State* of the Person, to whom it was pronounced, as being a *true Penitent*; or by virtue of the *Opus Operatum*, or bare Action itself of the Priest absolving him. If it receives its Validity ‘ from

' from the former; then it is clear, That al-
 ' though it runs in Forms *Absolute* yet it is in-
 ' deed *Conditional*, as depending upon the *Quali-*
 ' *fication* of the Person to whom it is pro-
 ' nounced: Who therefore owes the Remission
 ' of his Sins, not properly to the *Priest's Ab-*
 ' *solution*, but to his own *Repentance*; which
 ' made that Absolution effectual, and would
 ' undoubtedly have saved him, though the Priest
 ' had never absolv'd him.' And a little lower,
 ' In a Word, if a Man be a Penitent, his *Re-*
 ' *pentance* stamps his *Absolution* effectual. If not,
 ' let the Priest repeat the same *Absolution* to him
 ' Ten Thousand times; yet for all his being
 ' *absolved* in this *World*, God will condemn
 ' him in the other.'

LET all the World judge, whether any Man
 can suffer Loss, by praying to God in a Lan-
 guage which he understandeth; by not ex-
 changing a reasonable Service for one in a
 Tongue to him unknown, and consequently
 unreasonable; and to which he cannot, with
 Understanding, say *Amen*: since, as St. *Paul*
 saith, except Words, easy to be understood,
 are uttered by the Tongue, how shall it be
 known what is spoken? It is, he saith, speak-
 ing into the Air.

AND, (to make an End) who needs an in-
 fallible Judge of Controversies, if he believes
All which his Lord has *obliged* him to believe;
 if he practiseth *whatsoever* he has *commanded* him
 to do; and sees both written in the New Te-
 stament most *plainly*, and which he understands
 as *fully*, and more *clearly*, than he *doth* or *can* do
 the *Decretals* of *Popes*, or the *Determinations* of
Councils?

BUT

BUT I will not carry you into *all* the Disputes which are between us, and the Church of *Rome*. You will say, I know, that you have neither Learning, nor Leisure, whatever Inclination you may have for those Researches. I believe you have not: But if you have not, why will you leave us, before you have *examined*; before you are *sure* we are wrong; and that you *hazard* your Salvation by continuing in our *Communion*? Why should you acknowledge the *Supremacy* of the Pope, the *Infallibility*, before you *know* he has a *Right* to it? Or how should you know he has a *Right*; when there is not a *Word* of him, or his *Right* in the holy *Scriptures*? But you can read your *Bible*; you have Leisure to *inquire*, and Capacity to *understand*, I do not say *whatsoever* is contained in it; (for I do not think *any one* Man ever did that) but *whatsoever* our Blessed Saviour hath made *necessary* to be believed, and done, *as necessary* to Salvation.

SAY then, to the *Roman* Missionaries, that you will not pretend to be a *Judge* in those *Matters*; that you are no *Divine*, nor a Man of *Letters*; but a *plain* Christian, making *Inquiry* what you *must Do* to be *saved*. Intreat them to shew you *where* it is, that the *Christian* Lawgiver hath made the *Belief*; or the *Practice* of *all* which they would have you *Believe*, and *Do*, necessary to be believed, and done, for the *Hope* of *Eternal Life*. And, if they cannot do that (and you may be certain, *Sir*, they cannot) your *not* Believing, or *not* Doing those *Things*, can, by no Means, *affect* your *Eternal State*. I need not say, having said it so often, that the *Reason* is, because our Lord hath *not* made them

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Condition of his Covenant. This is a *short*, and a *sure* *method* with a *Roman Catholick*, or with any *Body* else who would allure you from the Communion of the Church of *England*, on Pretence, that you *cannot* obtain Salvation in it.

TO conclude, *Sir*, you must needs be safe where you are, if Christ can *make you safe*; if his Covenant be *Stable in all Things*, and *sure*; because you Believe, and Do *whatsoever* he hath *Bidden* you believe, and do. On the other Hand, there is, at least, a *Peril* of Idolatry; for you can never be *sure* that the Host is not Bread, (be sure you cannot if the Priest's Intention to consecrate be necessary) not near so certain as you are that it *is*. And, if it is, you *cannot* be of the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, without being an *Idolater*; and that, I incline to think, is somewhat worse than to be an *Heretick*.

I am not in a Humour to exaggerate Matters, to make old Wounds bleed afresh; but who can reflect on the *Anathemas*, the *Inquisitions*, the *Interdicts* of the Church of *Rome*, without *Astonishment*? Who can hear of her Persecutions; the *Stripes* and *Imprisonments*, the *Scourgings* and *Butcheries*, wherewithal she has turn'd Christendom into a *Shambles*, without *Horror*? Who that has read of the Ravages of the *Crusades*, the *Burnings* in *England*, and the *Massacres* of *Ireland*, and of *France*; the Cruelties, and Oppressions which the *Holy Father* has sent into *all the World*, and which he is preparing by the first Opportunity, to send among us, without saying, *My Soul come not into their Secret; unto their Assembly mine Honour be not thou united?* Where were the *Bowels*, the

Compassions of Humane Nature! the Meekness, and Gentleness of Christ Jesus, when these Things were perpetrated! But I will make no Advantage of the Tenderness, and good Nature, in which you so much excel.— I will not address your Passions, but your Reason; and I will trust it.

I will not affirm, that your Revolt to the Roman Communion will shake your Loyalty to the Government, (your Affection to it, it must) and be a Temptation to you, upon Occasion, to rise in Rebellion against your Sovereign; a Prince to whom you have so often sworn Allegiance; and who hath deserv'd so well of All of us; I know how well you love your Country. But I will venture to say to you, that, if when you have left us, you continue to do so, and persevere in your Duty to his Majesty, and be active in it; you will be made to know that you lack one Thing, to compleat your Character, and to give you the Lineaments, and finishing of a true Chatholick. But, I trust, it will never come to That.

YOU seem'd to be in some doubt, whether the Liberalities, which, you were saying, are dealt out in such abundance, by the Gentlemen of the Church of Rome, were not a Snare to the poorer sort; and inclin'd them to conclude in favour of so Beneficent a Religion. I will not go about to lessen, or to depreciate any Man's Charities. I wish there were more of them to be seen every where. But the founding of a Monastery, or the building an Hospital, has sometimes been known to have been a Work, not so much of Choice, as Necessity. It has been the Price of Transgression, of horrible Enormities; not so much the Product of a liberal

beral Heart, as of *Penance*; and *wrung* from People by way of *Compensation* for past Vices. If this hath been the Case, with respect to some great Charities, it may have an influence upon smaller ones. But I will be easy upon this Head. For your self, it can be no *Temptation* to you, Sir; you do not *want* them, nor receive any Advantages from them. For the Church of *England*, doth it not exhort to them? Have we no *Corporations* for Charities? For *Education* of Youth? For feeding the Hungry, and clothing the Naked? For helping *the Fatherless, and the Widow in their Afflictions*? The World is Witness. And so is God, I make no doubt, of as much *Alms done in secret*; not of constraint, but willingly, by Protestants, in this Church, and in this Nation, as in any Church, or any Country under Heaven. We do not *boast* of our Charities, whatsoever they be; much less do we imagine we *merit* by them, in the way of drawing a Debt upon him who *giveth us all Things*; no, we are *unprofitable Servants*; but you know us too well to believe there are *few Liberalists* among Protestants. However, I am obliged to you for the Hint; and will watch carefully over those, in the *most effectual manner*, whose Poverty may occasion their *Apostacy*.

AS for the *Bribes*, which (not without some Emotion) you said were *reported* to be dealt about, in order to make *Converts*, and which you *thought* had *carried off* some from us; I have only to say, did our Saviour, or his Apostles, *buy* their Disciples at a *Price*? *with Silver, and Gold, and with corruptible Things*? Did they offer Lands, or Houses, or any Temporal Advantages? No, they told them plainly that they

must *lose* them. It gives one, methinks, a Suspicion that he can never be the *Vicar* of Christ, nor they *Successors* of his Apostles, who take Measures so *opposite* to Theirs. They held out nothing but that *Eternal Life*, which God that cannot lie hath promised; aw'd Mankind with no Terrors, but those fetch'd from the *unseen* World: No more do we. We proclaim it aloud, as our Saviour hath taught us, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* We leave the rest to God, and their own Consciences; to their good Sense, and their own Reflection. Do not these Mercenaries hear their Lord calling after them, *What shall it profit a Man, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul: or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* They have their Reward. Such a Conduct is horrible: it is of *this World*, and therefore the *World* heareth it, and follows after it.

I do not doubt but you have been told, that the Church of *Rome* is the safer Communion; because Protestants allow Papists may be saved, but Papists say that Protestants *cannot*. We thank them for their Loves. We understand them. *Facile credimus, quæ volumus.* We wish them well in Both Worlds; and that makes us hope well of them. They hate us, and for that reason *Damn* us. But have these Men the *Keys of Hell, and Death*? No, no, they are in better Hands. Will our Charity towards them, or their Uncharitableness to us, *save*, or *damn*, either the One or the Other? I hope well of the *honest* Heathen: Shall that make me renounce Christianity? I hope well of a *sincere* *Roman Catholick*: Shall that make me embrace Popery?

Popery? By no means. I would not, however methinks, have these Gentlemen depend overmuch upon a Protestant Judgment in this Affair. They know we are not infallible. We will not be *obstinate Hereticks*; we own we may be *mistaken* in it; and tho' we hope *well* of them, to say the Truth, we are in pain for them; we are not without our *Doubtings*, our *Fears*, that it may not go so well with them as we *desire*. For my self, Sir, I profess to you freely, that was I to turn *Roman Catholick*, I believe verily I should not obtain Mercy. You must judge for your self: I judge no Man. I need not tell you there *is One that judgeth*.

AND to make *weight*, I make no Question, but you have had *All* the Fathers, the Councils, with their Holinesses at the Head of them, thrown into the *Scale*, to fetch up the poor Church of *England*, and the Reformers: You have heard, I warrant you, *Calvin* was a Conjuror, and *Luther* (it is a plain Case) was in League with the Devil. For the Fathers, Sir, if you and I cannot be safe till we know the Opinions of *All* of them; till we have separated the *spurious* from the *genuine*; clear'd the *Readings*; and perfectly taken their *Sense*; we must, I believe for ever *despair* of obtaining *Satisfaction*. However, I have such an Opinion of the *Charity*, of the good Sense, and Christian Erudition of those excellent Persons, that tho' I will not make them *absolute* Umpires of my Salvation, yet I will wager any thing *besides*, that there is not *One* of them, who hath said, that if a Man be *not* of the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, *he shall be damn'd*; or that, if I believe, I shall *not* be saved; that, if I keep
the

the Commandments, I shall not enter into Life. Or, if they should say so, I confess it would not move me ; the Gospel would weigh down All of them. The GOSPEL, the GOSPEL, is the Record that he hath given to us Eternal Life, upon those Conditions, and none other. The Texts are plain, the Readings not controverted, the Meaning undisputed ; and he that readeth them, it is impossible but he must understand. 'Tis the Highway in the Desert made strait for us by our God ; and the Unlearned may walk therein.

FOR the Characters of the Reformers, there is very little depends upon it. These are old Tales, neglected Scandal. As it happens, they are *Calumnies* which have been *refuted* an hundred times ; what no Man of Understanding, and Integrity, in the *Roman Church*, now, Believes. There are some, it is said, who not only *make Lies*, but *love* them. They were suitable to the *Genius of the Age*, and the Spirit of *Holy Church*, as it was then covered with *Darkness*, and *Barbarity* ; but no Man can repeat them, at this Time of Day, but one who can Believe *any thing* ; and who, to his *Credulity*, has join'd a *Malice*, and an *Impudence*, unworthy, not only of *Religion*, but *Humanity*. However, they serve still to *frighten* weak People : They are the *Raw-head* and *Bloody-bones* of the holy Mother, to *scare* her Children, and keep them within *Doors*. We use no such *low Arts* ; we despise such *Meannesses* ; we do not need them. We make no *Reprisals* ; we are not concern'd whether the Popes were Saints or Sinners, (they have not, I think, been accounted *Infallible* in their *Manners*) our Business is not with their *Lives*, but their *Doctrines*.

I am hopeful, Sir, that what I have discourf'd may have *some Effect*, to the *quieting of your Confcience*, and *avoiding all Scruple and Doubtfulnefs*. It is an Happinefs, no doubt, to think *rightly* of every Thing; to underftand the *whole Scripture*: It is *profitable for Inftitution*. But, if you *fhould be mistaken* in your Notions of Things, which Jesus Chrift *has not made the Terms of the Divine Acceptance*; you cannot be at all in Danger of *lofing* your Reward. For the reft, you need not be overfollicitous. However, though I will not pretend to *difpute* with any Man you may be pleas'd to bring me; yet, *for your felf*, if any Thing in Difference between the two Churches *ftick* with you, and you defire to be *refolv'd* which is *right*; I will do the beft I can to *fatisfy* you: I will carefully confider any *Objections* you may make, or be *taught* to make, (provided you *cannot* answer them your felf) to any Doctrine which you are *obliged* to *af-fent* to, or any thing which is *enjoin'd* you to *practife* in the Church of *England*. And I will do it in the Fear of God. I will not put you off with any Answer which I am not fatisfied withal my felf. Others may ferve you with more Addrefs; no Man fhall with greater Sincerity.

IT is one Part of Wifdom to know when one is well; and it is a greater to keep fo. If you will enter into fo large a Field of Controverfy, as is That which you have begun to look into a little (which I have fhewn you need not do) hear both Sides. Do nothing rashly. If I cannot answer your Objections, confult thofe who, having more Leifure, and

a superior Skill in the sacred Literature, you have great reason to think may be more successful. You live in the Neighbourhood of a great Number of learned Persons, to whom, I dare promise, you may have an easy Access; and who will not think it below their Character, by any Acts of Condescension, to do you good. Do nothing by Partiality: Remember, you must answer to him who *searcheth the Heart*, and who is the *Judge of Quick and Dead*. As we are not to *speake*, so neither are we to *hear deceitfully for God*. Truth does not need it; nor doth *his Church* require, or approve it.

IN the mean time, let us join together in earnest Prayer to Almighty God, who giveth *Wisdom unto the Simple*, for that which is *pure, and peaceable, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy*; that we may attain to the *Knowledge of the Truth*, and to the *Doctrine which is according unto Godliness*. Which he grant unto all Men for *Jesus sake*. I am,

Dear, S I R,

Your most affectionate,

faithful Servant,

